

New Conference Facility for the Manor Park Fieldhouse



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The Manor Park Toastmasters recently announced its initiation of a community drive to fund the construction of an addition to Fieldhouse on Thornwood Road.

The President of Manor Park Toastmasters, Alan Rebane explained, "Many adult groups use the Fieldhouse for all sorts of community meetings and adult-oriented events, so a conference room would be a natural extension to the current facilities. We really need a place for the adults, but we're looking for feedback from residents. The success of this project will depend on what the community wants."

The new addition is envisaged to be a simple and functional facility. Initial plans call for a room that will accommodate as many as 50 people with the flexibility to be arranged either theatre or boardroom style. But as the Toastmasters Club points out, these are just some preliminary concepts. Any proposed facility would blend in with the current design and would be coordinated with upgrades to the rest of the building. Today, over 100 people use the Fieldhouse daily and would benefit from any improvements. The Toastmasters have received support for the initiative from the Manor Park Community Council (MPCC), the organization that programs Fieldhouse activities on the city's behalf. "The City of Ottawa is on board with the idea of renovating and expanding the Fieldhouse. City staff have started looking into critical issues like property ownership, by-law constraints and policies on partnerships with the community," reports Lana Burpee, MPCC Executive Director.

They have met with the Manor Park Community Association (MPCA) to discuss their initiative. At its December meeting, the association expressed support for the Toastmaster proposal. "This is a timely idea and one that we hope will generate broad-based community support" says Pat O'Keefe, MPCA vice-president. "After all, the Fieldhouse was originally built to meet the needs of our community. Today, space is at a premium and groups using the facility in the evenings and on weekends meet under less than ideal conditions. Our community has grown and diversified. The Fieldhouse needs to do the same."

Jacques Legendre was enthusiastic upon hearing of the Toastmaster proposal. "Manor Park residents value the Fieldhouse as a centre of community life," said Mr. Legendre. "Everyone has realized for some time that the demands on its available spaces exceed its capacity. I offer my congratulations to the Manor Park Toastmasters for their initiative and pledge my support to assist this effort in any way that I may be able. Great idea! Bravo!"

Next steps will be to meet with all other community organizations to agree upon long term community needs, and how to meet these needs in the Fieldhouse.

The Toastmasters hope that a proposed extension to the Fieldhouse can be funded solely by private-sector donations and sponsors. "We have two of Ottawa's largest builders located within minutes of the facility, as well as a number of company CEOs who recognize the importance for their employees to develop effective communication and leadership skills. We're looking forward to their support," said Mr. Rebane.

Does Mr. Rebane really believe they can accomplish this without the use of taxpayer funding?" "We have a saying in Toastmasters," he replies. "If you think you can't, you won't. If you think you can, you will. If the community wants this facility, we can work together to get it done."

"Right now we need to hear from the community. Volunteers are needed to help move this project forward, hammer out the requirements and nail down the specifics," said Mr. Rebane.

A community meeting is plan for interested parties for: DATE TIME. To volunteer, or comment, contact: mpttoastmasters@canada.com.

Manor Park Toastmasters offer learning opportunities for adults in business, communications, and leadership skills. The Club has become a regular and welcome fixture in our area since its inception a year ago. Manor Park Toastmasters currently meet every Wednesday evening at 7:15.